



Compassion's other name: Dr. William Pearce

Compassion's other name: Dr. William Pearce

It may have come as no surprise to his colleagues, mentees and patients at Northwestern University that Dr. William Pearce, Charles and Violet Baldwin Professor of Surgery Emeritus, was named the 2019 Lifetime Achievement awardee by the Society for Vascular Surgery at its annual meeting in June.

At Northwestern he has been an accomplished leader of one of the strongest vascular surgical departments in the nation. He mentored countless professionals, not just fellows, residents and students, but also nurses and faculty.

The Lifetime award is just one of many that have honored this extraordinary surgeon. In 2007, he earned the Surgery Mentoring Award from the American Heart Association's Council on Cardiovascular Surgery and Anesthesia, then was named Faculty Mentor of the Year by Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine in 2008 and was named Mentor of the Year by the school in 2010. In 2014, he was named to the Feinberg's Teaching Hall of Fame and Mecklenberg Distinguished Physician Awards. Over 37 years, many of his proteges have gone on to outstanding careers and leadership positions in academics. He was chief of the Feinberg's Division of Vascular Surgery from 1998 to 2010.

Among his many attributes, his extraordinary personality of caring and compassion was mentioned at length by every one of his nominators.

"He is constantly stopped (in the hallways) by appreciative employees or patients," wrote one of his mentees, Dr. Melina Kibbe. "His compassion for people is extraordinary. For example, when one of the cafeteria workers was sick, he sent her flowers. He often gives out his home number and has spent hours on the phone with patients explaining their disease, treatment options, and simply providing comfort and support. His children have recounted numerous stories of how Dr. Pearce has made personal house calls to patients who do not have the means to travel to the clinic for outpatient visits. He is keenly aware of their financial struggles and has waived his own reimbursement when patients are not able to pay."

He is an internationally known clinical vascular surgeon with interests in PAD, venous problems, and aortic aneurysms, and he is a recognized researcher with expertise in the pathophysiology of aortic aneurysms. He has been the principal investigator or co-PI on grants totaling nearly \$62 million dollars. He has written more than 250 scholarly articles, has edited 42 books and written 122 book chapters.

In the midst of all these achievements, he also had a busy clinical practice and has volunteered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Landstuhl Medical Center in Germany during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. He went on medical missions to Guatemala in 2009 and 2012. In addition to providing medical care, he has volunteered several times to build housing on Native American reservations and serving in a local soup kitchen. In 2013, he was awarded the Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award from Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

Compassion's other name: Dr. William Pearce

Published on Society for Vascular Surgery (<https://vascular.org>)

While Dr. Pearce taught his fellows and residents how to become accomplished surgeons, said one of his nominees, Dr. Mark Eskandari, “his greatest impact during his 30-year career at Northwestern has been exemplifying the essentials of compassionate care. He personally connects with each patient and recalls everyone he has ever treated.”

He also has insisted that his staff make time for their own families despite their demanding schedules. “A saying of his with which we are all familiar,” Dr. Kibbe said, “was ‘family comes first.’”

His extraordinary compassion had some unanticipated side effects, however. “Because of his inability to say no to door-to-door sales people,” Dr. Kibbe noted, his children have told her, “they had so many magazine subscriptions that they didn’t know what to do with them.”

Article Date: Tuesday, July 16, 2019

Author: Re-posted from the July 2019 issue of Vascular Specialist

Tags: Vascular Specialist

Article Type: Article